DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 087 442 IR 000 186

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TITLE School Planning, Evaluation and Communication System (SPECS).
PUB DATE Apr 73
NOTE 4p.; Paper presented at the Association for Educational Data Systems Annual Convention (New Orleans, Louisiana, April 16 through 19, 1973)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Budgeting; Communication (Thought Transfer); Cost Effectiveness; Educational Administration; Management Systems; Program Budgeting; Program Descriptions; *Program Evaluation; *Program Planning; *School Planning; School Systems; *Systems Approach
IDENTIFIERS AEDS; Association for Educational Data Systems; CASEA; Center Advanced Study Educational Administration; General Learning Corporation; *School Planning Evaluation Communication System; SPECS; University of Oregon

ABSTRACT

A comprehensive school planning tool is available from General Learning Corporation and the Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration at the University of Oregon. This School Planning, Evaluation and Communication System (SPECS) provides a deliverable system of training, implementation strategies and materials and technical support services to educational organizations interested in new planning approaches. SPECS services include systems analysis, cost accounting, program planning, goal definition and assessment. All are designed to aid schools in planning and managing their programs, and budgets, assessing student learning and instructional activities, and involving the total community in the educational effort. Field testing of SPECS indicates that it can be successfully implemented and that it will provide school districts with the ability to gather information about desired and actual inputs, processes and outputs. (LB)

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SCHOOL PLANNING, EVALUATION AND COMMUNICATION SYSTEM (SPECS)

Edward C. Flocco

J. B. Kaplan & Co.

INTRODUCTION

This presentation describes the nature and components of a new comprehensive school planning tool from General Learning Corporation and the Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration at the University of Oregon, currently available to public school systems on a commercial basis.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

In October of 1972 the General Learning Corporation (GLC) began to provide training materials and services to the field of public education for a comprehensive educational planning process which has been under development at the Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration (CASEA) since 1969. The SPECS program, developed by Drs. John M. Nagle and Terry L. Eidell, was designed to provide a deliverable system of training, implementation strategies and materials and technical support services to an educational organization wishing to implement a comprehensive system of rational planning. SPECS provides a school system with services in any or all of the following elements of the planning process: systems analysis, cost accounting, program planning, broad goal definition, assessing achievement of goals. These elements are designed to provide a school district with specific capabilities, as displayed below:

THE FIVE SPECS COMPONENTS AND THE SEVEN CAPABILITIES THEY HELP A SCHOOL DISTRICT DEVELOP

The Five Components of SPECS		The Seven School District Capabilities Developed by SPECS
One:	A systems analysis of the school district	. the ability to identify and describe in detail the district's on-going activities, or "operating programs" their hierarchical relationships, and the personnel responsible for them
Two:	Program cost-accounting and budgeting	. the ability to monitor and identify in detail the budgets and costs of those "operating programs"

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		the ability to assess how well professional personnel can plan, implement, and evaluate instructional and noninstructional programs
Three:	Program planning, implementation, and evaluation	the ability to describe and assess student learning-both for individuals and for groups-in terms of actual performance or behavorial change
		the ability to compare and assess instructional and noninstructional programs on the basis of their desired and actual outcomes, processes, and costs
Four:	Community-based broad goal definition	the ability to involve the district's community in defining and then continually refining its hierarchy of broad educational goals - its set of "intellectual programs" addressed to the question, "What should our schools be doing for students"
Five:	Assessing achievement of the district's broad goals	the ability to assess how well the district's on-going activities, or "operating programs," are both speaking to and actually achieving the broad goals defined by its "intellectual programs"

CURRENT SERVICES

Since October of 1972, two kinds of SPECS services have been available to the field: 2 day Orientation Workshops designed to provide a participant with, among other things, an understanding and awareness of the components of SPECS and the capabilities they help a school district develop, his district's status with regard to the capabilities, the conditions and requirements to implement SPECS; implementation services in the form of consulting, training, technical assistance and user materials.

The workshop, geared for 30-40 people, can be offered to any group, running the range from representatives from one school district to open participation by any interested parties in a workshop offered by GLC or one of its trainers on a pre-announced basis. The workshop is highly participatory, and does provide the attendee with positive learning experiences in addition to a thorough orientation to SPECS.

Implementation services are tailored to a district's needs, and allow a school system to enter into this comprehensive planning system in relation to its current capabilities. Though there are specific strategies and materials designed to achieve each of the ends of SPECS, and suggested ways of implementing each of the components, there is no requirement to implement all of the components or to do so within only one strategy. The district's needs and its own specific organization are the key determining factors in any implementation proposal.

HISTORY

SPECS had its genesis within a broader program at CASEA, begun in 1969, which was designed "to produce, test and disseminate integrated sets of instructional materials that will provide school personnel with the knowledge and skills needs to solve specific organizational and administrative problems associated with instructional change." More specifically, however, SPECS was designed as a workable approach to implementing program-planning budgeting systems (PPBS). In 1969, interest in new planning technologies for schools had begun to peak, though until that time no system had been developed which was truly "implementable" and which was carried down to the level of educational implementation, the classroom. SPECS was designed to satisfy these needs.

SPECS is unique then in several areas: the system is deliverable (it contains training techniques, instructional and user materials, and suggested implementation strategies); it extends beyond conventional PPBS and is involved with all of the elements of educational planning, including development of broad goals and specification of learner objectives; it is comprehensive, in that it interrelates all planning elements and clearly distinguishes among professional and public prerogatives; it brings planning to "where it's at" in education, the classroom. Thus SPECS satisfies the current press for many movements in education, including more effective cost accounting procedures, accountability, and program evaluation.

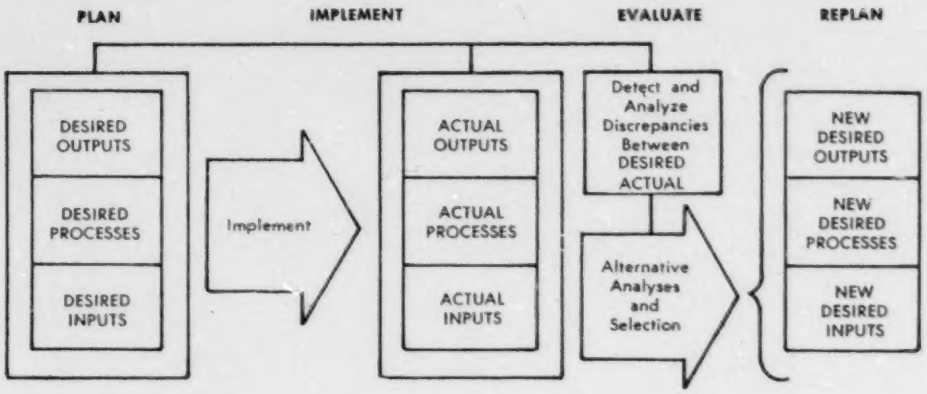
SPECS, prior to its marketing by GLC, was thoroughly tested in the South Lane school district in Oregon. Currently, of course, both orientation and implementation materials and strategies are being implemented and refined nationwide. However, during the initial implementations the following questions were answered in the affirmative:

1. Can SPECS actually be implemented in a school system?
2. Do the SPECS instructional materials really work? Do they effectively teach meaningful knowledge and skills and do they have any effect upon attitudes?
3. And ultimately, of course, even if SPECS can be implemented, and even if the materials are effective, what differences will SPECS make on a school district?

Implementation of SPECS began in 1970 and is currently being completed in South Lane. It has met with success, particularly on the part of teachers, and has led to the development of feasible materials and processes for extension to other settings.

We can conceive of SPECS as a series of processes and materials, organized into five discrete but interrelated components in an Organizational Systems Design (See List, pp. 1,2) structured to provide a school district with the capabilities necessary to complete six boxes of critical information about every operating program - desired and actual, outputs, processes and inputs. And these six boxes can be developed for any operating program - instructional as well as non-instructional. Thus the SPECS system allows us to develop rational planning approaches and an appropriate display of information about any or all of the discrete operating programs of a school district. The SPECS model for program planning, which conceptualizes the completion of the six critical boxes for any program, is displayed below.

The SPECS Model for Program Planning and Evaluation



THE TRAINING NETWORK

A nationwide group of trainers is currently offering Orientation and Implementation services to the field. The network is comprised of staff members of GLC and CASEA, and members of regional school development councils across the country.

For further information on SPECS, contact:

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